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ABSTRACT

The site of the Cornell-OEO project in South Brooklyn is described in terms of physical characteristics, ethnic composition, family composition, age of residents, income, and other qualities. Two large housing projects in the area are described. The charging character of the neighborhoods and its impact on the residents is outlined. Tables and maps supplement the text. (MS)

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CORNELL OEO PROJECT:

AN EXPLORATION IN URBAN EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Supplementary Report No. 1

The Project Area

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CE 000 403

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THE PROJECT AREA

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE CORNELL-OEO PROJECT IN SOUTH BROOKLYN

The Cornell-OEO Project in South Brooklyn, N.Y. was an attempt to develop and adapt the traditional methods of Cooperative Extension to serve better the needs of the urban poor. It was a demonstration project, undertaken jointly by the New York State College of Home Economics at Cornell University and the New York State Office of Economic Opportunity,[1] with a commitment to training, service, and evaluative research. It was funded by the New York State Legislature for a two and one-half year period, from November, 1968 through June, 1971.

The major goal of the project was to improve the competence of low-income homemakers in the areas of purchasing, budgeting, and home management. Additional goals were to improve the feelings of self-worth of these homemakers and other members of their families, to improve their ability to make use of various community services, and to mobilize some community activity to increase the range of services available. During the project, 38 women from the community were trained to be teaching homemakers and employed by the project as soon as their training was completed. The title they chose for themselves was "family assistant," and the range of their activities was considerably broader than that of teaching homemakers. In the later stages of the project a major goal became enhancement of the ability of the family assistants to take leadership roles in the community after the project was over. To this end they were given a final round of training in various human relations and leadership skills during the last six months of the project.

Physical Setting and Project Administration

The specific area served by the project includes roughly 60,000 people in and around two New York City public housing projects, Gowanus Houses and Wyckoff Gardens. The neighborhood is ethnically mixed, not in neatly balanced thirds as originally believed, but with about two-fifths of the families black, two fifths Puerto Rican (or Spanish-speaking), and the remainder from other ethnic groups. An apartment was rented in Wyckoff Gardens

[1] The names were subsequently changed to the New York State College of Human Ecology and the New York State Office of Community Affairs.

for use as a teaching and service facility, and also to provide office space for some staff members.

The first five months of the project were devoted mainly to working out administrative and facility arrangements and to recruiting key staff. The project director, Albert J. Harris, Jr., had been a program director at Colony House, the major community center in the project area. The training director, Miss Suzanne Matsen, had been an assistant professor in consumer education at the College. She moved to New York City in the late fall to initiate preparations for the project. The research director, Edward Ostrander, an associate professor at the College, remained in Ithaca where most members of the research staff were located. Other key staff included a research associate in Brooklyn and several group workers who supervised the activities of the family assistants.

Training and Service

The first group of 12 trainees was recruited in March, 1969. In a little over a year four groups or waves, each composed of eight to 12 women, were trained. Each wave participated in a half-day, eight-week course covering 168 hours of field and classroom training. The training content they covered included food and nutrition, child development, interior decoration, money management, family health, consumer protection, the family life cycle, and skills in working with families. The curriculum content and manner of presentation evolved from one wave to the next. Revisions were based on the suggestions of the trainees, initiative of the instructors, and availability of appropriate outside personnel.

Women who were graduated from the course were given the title, "family assistant." After graduation, family assistants visited community homes to work with families on a one-to-one basis. In the service phase, the family assistants' workweek was officially 20 hours. Twelve hours were to be spent working with families and the remaining eight hours devoted to in-service training. At first family assistants recruited their families by going door-to-door and explaining the project services. Once contact was made with families the urgency of some problems often resulted in involvement far exceeding the 12 hour workweek. It became evident from the outset that many of

the problems encountered by the family assistants were not narrowly related to home management and consumer education but encompassed the gamut of human problems including interpersonal relations, health, alcoholism, drugs, housing, and school and welfare issues.

Family assistants quickly found they could help alleviate many of these problems by telling the family which existing community agencies or resources might provide assistance. This expeditor role was a common one for family assistants to play early in the project history. In other cases the family assistant actually took people to an agency and sometimes assumed an advocacy role for the family in dealing with the agency.

In-service training activities for family assistants were extremely varied. Formal teaching, demonstrations, discussions, sensitivity training, and field trips were used to increase knowledge and develop skills in interpersonal relations. Some speakers were invited from New York City social service agencies and other content specialists came from Cornell. Occasionally the in-service training involved a continuing program, such as a workshop in sewing or furniture refinishing. Other in-service activity included Red Cross home health training that had implications for future employment.

The individual contact or one-to-one approach to families was retained throughout the project. Families continued to request service or continued to be contacted primarily through word-of-mouth communication. As the project matured additional activities were undertaken. Family assistants and staff organized into special interest committees on education, housing, and child care to actively participate with already functioning groups in the community to try to improve community resources and delivery of service. Family assistant members of this committee attended community meetings and reported back to the project staff.

Workshops also were held for the community residents in facilities provided by the project. Family assistants and staff taught sewing, furniture refinishing, and interior decorating to groups of community residents. The workshops for community groups extended the outreach of the project to new people who had not been contacted previously by family assistants. Project staff, including family assistants, participated in classroom panel discussions on the Cornell Campus several times during the course of the project.

Evaluative Research

The research component of the project had three major objectives: (1) to collect and interpret data useful to the project administration in revising training plans and priorities for service activities; (2) to maintain systematic records of project activities that could be used in later analysis of the project as a social enterprise--more specifically, as a venture in university-community cooperation; and (3) to assess the impact of the project on its Brooklyn staff, the families they served, and on the surrounding community.

The major obstacle to these goals was the intense distrust of all types of research activity by most of the paraprofessional members of the Brooklyn staff. Many family assistants freely voiced the suspicion that the Ithaca-based research staff had ulterior motives and would exploit them and the families with whom they worked. They expressed resentment over the long history of research reports that have highlighted derogatory information about minority groups. Such inquiries and reports are seen both as invasion of privacy and as exploitation of people in unfortunate circumstances. In the experience of the family assistants, research studies seldom if ever lead to any observable benefit to the subjects of research.

Two major approaches were used by the research staff in attempting to deal with this distrust. The first was an agreement that there would be no systematic attempt to collect research data outside project goals. Project research data would come through reports made by family assistants and records of Brooklyn training sessions and staff conferences. Any exception to this rule would be with the approval of the staff and participants. An early exception was made with the agreement of participants to enable a graduate student member of the research staff to collect data for her thesis.

The second major approach was a series of visits to Brooklyn by members of the Ithaca research staff, and a series of conferences and guided interviews in both Brooklyn and Ithaca with key members of the Brooklyn staff.

These approaches were successful in making possible the regular collection of research data throughout the life of the project; however they represented a compromise that was not very satisfactory to any of the parties

concerned. In particular, getting usable reports from the family assistants proved to be far more difficult than the research staff had expected. Nevertheless, the family assistants eventually made reports on most of their dealings with families, and the research staff developed a reasonably objective system for recording major problems faced by families and the major types of service given to them.

Research Findings

Probably the most important lesson learned was that the project actually could be carried out, including all three components of training, service, and evaluative research. The project has provided important evidence that it is indeed possible to adapt the traditional methods of Cooperative Extension to serve the needs of the urban poor. The project has also indicated that the major modification required is the employment of paid paraprofessionals to work with individuals and families on a one-to-one basis. Though this adds tremendously to the cost of extension work, it seems to be essential for comprehensive, family-oriented programs in poverty areas.

The research efforts of the project have shown once again the tremendous gulf that lies between the goals and assumptions of middle class academic people--including both those professionally trained in Cooperative Extension and those professionally trained in research--and the goals and assumptions of the urban poor and their developing community leaders. More importantly, perhaps, the project has shown that under favorable circumstances it is possible to reach a fair degree of mutual understanding, and to develop arrangements that make possible cooperative efforts toward the goals of each group. These arrangements are difficult to work out, and they require considerable modification of the initial assumptions of all groups concerned.

Lessons Learned

These "lessons" learned from the whole project experience seem more firmly established than any specific "research findings." The most important research finding is probably the discovery that families with a considerable number of pressing problems are unable to utilize help in the areas of home management and consumer education, even when this help is offered on a one-to-one basis. These families often did benefit from direct personal help by the family assistants. The commonest kinds of personal help were: taking

a family member to a medical clinic or social agency, serving as an interpreter to non-Spanish-speaking agency personnel, interceding for a family with welfare or educational authorities.

The impact of the Cornell-OEO Project proved very difficult to assess. It was most dramatic--although probably not lasting--on those individuals for whom family assistants provided direct personal help with some immediate pressing problem. It is likely that in many families there were more lasting results from the educational efforts of the family assistants--mainly in the areas of better purchasing practices and greater ability to make use of existing community services. It is difficult to document these results in the absence of a follow-up study.

The staff believes that the project has had a major impact on the self-image and social competence of the majority of family assistants employed in it, though this would be very difficult to document objectively. There is no doubt, however, that a number of family assistants have gone on to jobs involving more responsibility than any they had held before participating in the Cornell-OEO Project, and that others are playing more active roles in community affairs than they did previously. The enduring impact on the general South Brooklyn community can only be assessed in the years to come.

THE PROJECT AREA

Introduction

The location chosen for the Cornell-OEO Project was an area in Brooklyn, New York which consisted of 13 census tracts containing roughly 60,000 people. The project area encompassed a substantial portion of the area known as South Brooklyn and contained two housing projects, Gowanus Houses built in 1949 and Wyckoff Gardens completed December 31, 1966. South Brooklyn, once the southern part of the original 17th century town of Breuckelen, is today the northwest quadrant of Brooklyn. It lies between Prospect Park (on the southeast) and the East River (on the northwest). The Gowanus Canal with its accompanying industries and truck traffic enters the area from the south. There is no longer any traffic on the canal, but manufacturing enterprises have remained active. South Brooklyn is also situated between two areas that were developed in the 19th century as suburbs for the well-to-do, Brooklyn Heights and Park Slope.

There were three reasons for choosing South Brooklyn as the project site. First, it was part of a designated poverty area in the City of New York. Second, not many programs were already operating in the area, and third, the area was believed to have equal proportions of white, black, and Puerto Rican residents. Some of the consultants concerned with initiating the Cornell-OEO Project had had previous experience working with South Brooklyn leaders on a community action program and recommended the area. They also felt that the management and the tenants' associations in the two housing projects would be receptive to the project. This endorsement of the South Brooklyn community weighed heavily in the decision to locate the project there.

Of the assumptions given above, two proved correct. There were few programs in South Brooklyn and the Cornell-OEO Project was able to contribute substantially to the conduct of social welfare programs in this area. The housing management and the tenants' associations were supportive throughout. Both began by suggesting family assistants and families. Cooperation with management was later played down, however, because the family assistants and others believed that identification with the management would discourage potential participants.

The other assumptions, that the area was an equal mixture of three ethnic groups and that it could be properly described as a poverty area turned out to be problematic. This section examines the composition of the project area in terms of people and housing.

Initial Impressions of the Project Area

Several views of the project area were held by those working on the project proposal before it was funded by the New York State Legislature. In a draft of the research section of the proposal which was composed in the fall of 1967, Wyckoff Gardens and Gowanus Houses were described as

> ...located in a deteriorating neighborhood with all of the problems of newly arriving low socio-economic families in need of a variety of social and welfare services.[1]

The project area, it was said

> ...could best be described as 'blighted.' A large number of multi-problem families are living in...condemed buildings, right next to the projects, mostly located there by the Department of Welfare who pays their rent.[2]

The picture painted was bleak. And it assumed that there were populations living in the area who were in need of the then proposed project's services, namely newcomers to the city and multiproblem families. There was no further emphasis in the project planning on urban in-migrants, but the focus on multiproblem families remained until the spring of the following year. There was also a concern at this time with chronic poor housekeepers. It was thought that there were a number of tenants in the housing projects who were being evicted because of poor housekeeping and that the project could aid these people by teaching them home economics skills. In April, 1968 there was a major change of direction. It was decided not to concentrate on multiproblem families (whether or not they existed) nor on chronic poor housekeepers, who it turned out, were rarely if ever evicted because of housekeeping deficiencies.

Attention was then turned to the proposed additions to Wyckoff Gardens. The New York City Housing Authority owned land adjacent to this project and was officially going to build a substantial number of new housing units on it.

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[1] "Proposal for Action Research Project: An Analysis of the Potential of Cooperative Extension Techniques in Solving Problems of the Urban Disadvantaged in Contractual Partnership Between the New York State College of Home Economics, Cornell University, and the New York State Office of Economic Opportunity," (undated, between 8/67 and 12/67) p. 9.

[2] Ibid., p. 10.

When new public housing is built, it is the city's policy to offer former residents of the area first choice in occupying it. It was thought that the Cornell-OEO Project could assist in this process by preparing people for occupancy of the new housing. By the time the project began operation, however, the land had already been cleared so that there were no prospective tenants to work with. By the end of the project, in June, 1971, construction had not yet started.

In general, the impression held by those preparing the project proposal was that the site chosen in South Brooklyn was occupied mainly by low-income people of whom the more fortunate were living in the two housing projects and the less fortunate in the surrounding row houses and five and six story walk-ups which were in poor condition.

Ethnic Composition of the Project Area

It is possible to establish with certainty the ethnic composition of the project area only for the year 1960. (At this writing the Census Bureau has declared the tabulation of the 1970 census for New York City invalid). For succeeding years the figures are estimates or deal with discrete populations such as school-aged children, persons receiving public assistance, housing project populations, etc.

Examination of the 1960 census shows that the census tracts in the project area south of Douglass Street and further east, south of Sterling Street (i.e., tracts 75, 125, 131, 133, and 135) were predominantly white. (See Table 1). Only in tract 131 (see Map 1) were blacks and Puerto Ricans a substantial proportion of the population, in this case 45% of the total. In the tracts north of Douglass Street (39, 41, 43, 69, 71, 127, 129.0 and 129.1) Puerto Ricans made up from 25 to 50% of the population and outnumbered blacks two or three or more to one, with two exceptions.

Tracts 71 and 127 both had a large concentration of blacks. Tract 71 was the site of the Gowanus Houses and tract 127 was to become the site of Wyckoff Gardens. The former tract approached an equal distribution of blacks, whites, and Puerto Ricans while the latter was predominantly black.

This situation seems to have remained much the same through 1965. The New York City Planning Department made estimates of the population of health areas in New York City for 1965. (See Table 3). A health area is the smallest unit for reporting sociological and health data in New York City and is made up of one of more census tracts which have a combined population of 15,000 to

35,000. The 13 census tracts in the project area make up two full health areas and parts of two others. (See Map 1)

Again, the area containing Gowanus Houses (Health Area 24) does seem to have approached an even mix of the three ethnic groups. Health Area 26 in which Wyckoff Gardens was going to be built showed a concentration of blacks, while the other two health areas were more than two-thirds white.

More recent figures cover only particular groups, but seem to point to an expansion of the Puerto Rican population. In particular, the school-aged population of the area seems to have been predominantly Puerto Rican in recent years. (Table 4)[1] The school district figures for 1967-1968 show that 50% of the students in public schools in District 15, which includes South Brooklyn, had Spanish surnames. In the elementary schools serving the area, P.S. 32 and P.S. 38, Puerto Rican children were 47.4 and 60.4 percent of the total respectively. This proportion was 64.1 percent in the intermediate school, I.S. 6.

The completion of Wyckoff Gardens helped increase the number and proportion of Puerto Ricans somewhat as a larger percentage of this group was included in the project than had lived in the neighborhood previously.

When the Cornell-OEO Project began operation in March of 1969, it is likely that the black population of the project area was concentrated in and around the two housing projects and was predominant around Wyckoff. The Puerto Rican population was more evenly distributed, but both blacks and Puerto Ricans were to be found primarily in Health Areas 24 and 26 in the northern half of the project area.

In the actual operation of the project only three of the women accepted for training (less than 10 percent) were white. Balance between black and Puerto Rican was attempted. Special effort was made to recruit bilingual trainees after it became clear that the percentage of Puerto Rican families in the neighborhood was higher than expected. Of the 467 families served by the project in one-to-one contacts, 57 percent were Puerto Rican or other Spanish-speaking people, 36 percent black, 6 percent white, and one percent other.

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[1] Other Spanish-speaking people such as Panamanians, Dominicans, and people from the West Indies are often included in the category "Puerto Rican."

The Housing Projects

Headquarters for the project was established in an apartment in Wyckoff Gardens. This choice was a fortunate one. Wyckoff was newer than Gowanus and thus more attractive. Since it was newer it also had higher status which would not be so obvious to those unversed in New York City Housing Authority policy.[1]

Local housing project managers are in charge of screening applications and selecting tenants only when a new project or a new building is first opened. (In addition, only at this time do people living in the immediate area, within a quarter mile radius, have priority over everyone else). At this time also ethnic mixture can be arranged. After the initial set of tenants has been selected, vacancies are filled by the central office of the Housing Authority and the local manager has no control.

The general experience of housing projects under this policy has been that from the management point of view the quality and desirability of the tenants goes down hill steadily from the time when they are opened. This is because of the priority system under which the central housing authority office sends mostly families with acute problems to fill vacancies.

Over a period of twenty years, Gowanus Houses had undergone this change, according to the manager of the Wyckoff project, and the contrast between the two projects was well recognized, he thought. Few of the original tenants were still living at Gowanus. (Some of the family assistants in the first class were among the original tenants). Thus, Wyckoff tenants probably would not have been willing to go to Gowanus whereas Gowanus people were quite willing to go to Wyckoff.

In support of the Wyckoff manager's contentions, Table 5a shows that the number and proportion of families on welfare in both projects increased substantially between 1967 and 1970. Gowanus, however, had a greater percentage of people on welfare in 1970, and it should also be noted that many of

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[1] The discussion of Housing Authority policy is taken from an interview with the manager of the Wyckoff Gardens Housing Project. "Memo: Margaret Harding's Visit to South Brooklyn, Nov. 14, 1969," 11/19/69 Margaret Harding. (unpaged)

those receiving public assistance in Wyckoff were elderly, 42% as opposed to 13% for Gowanus.[1] The proportion of broken families also increased substantially between 1967 and 1970 in both projects, but again, the percentage for Gowanus is much higher, 30% as compared to 11.5% in Wyckoff. Thus, despite the fact that the average gross income in Gowanus has been higher than that for Wyckoff, the latter seems to contain a more stable, self-sufficient population.

The Nature of the Project Area

Major poverty areas were identified in 1965 in New York in a study by the City Administrator's office from data supplied by the City Planning, Health and Welfare Departments; the Youth Board; and the Economic Opportunity Committee.[2] In the report, Developing New York City's Human Resources, health areas 24 and 26, which contain Gowanus and Wyckoff, were classified as first magnitude poverty areas and health areas 25 and 42 were classified as second magnitude poverty areas.[3]

The Cornell-OEO Project then, was located in an area that was generally perceived as a poverty area. The project, however, operated through individual and small group contacts. It dealt with the people it found in the area, and when the broad brush of statistics was thrown away, quite a different situation emerged. The project director said it was very hard to describe the neighborhood because it changed from block to block and almost from house to house. This was true both of the quality of housing and the composition of the population. In the southwest corner of the project area, for example,

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[1] Wyckoff Gardens was not completely occupied on Jan. 1, 1967, the date when the data for 1967 was collected. It is not possible, therefore, to measure precisely the changes in its population between 1967 and 1970.

[2] Developing New York City's Human Resources, Vol. II, pp. 1-4. Report of a study group of the Institute of Public Administration to Mayor John V. Lindsay. June, 1966. Mitchell Sviridoff, Study Director.

[3] Ibid., p.4. The health areas were ranked by using three major indices--the total of persons receiving welfare, juvenile deliquency, and live births on general service--which, it was found, reflected several others. The indices were ranked in deciles and averaged for each health area. Areas with decile ranks of ten to nine were considered concentrations of poverty of the first magnitude, while those with ranks of eight to seven were considered second magnitude poverty areas.

there was a rather large population of Italian descent.[1] These were people who had once worked on the docks along the Gowanus Canal.

A survey of a block in the middle of the project area (St. Mark's Pl. between 3rd and 4th Avenues) showed that the population was predominantly Puerto Rican (57%) and that over half the people living there were children (under 18).[2] The few white and black residents of the block were elderly persons living alone who were paying lower rents because of long tenancy. The survey was done sometime in 1970. Fifty percent of the families interviewed had lived in their apartments less than four years.[3]

The extreme diversity of the project area only became apparent after the project began operation in the spring of 1969. At this point it was discovered that there were substantial renovation efforts occurring in certain portions of the project area, particularly north of Wyckoff Street along Dean, Bergen, and Pacific Streets. Accounts by researchers stated,

> The renovation process is much closer to our project area than I realized . . .It is not limited to the brownstone front houses farther away, but it includes even older brick front houses which were built as single family houses in the mid 19th century. Some of the family assistants pointed them out from the project windows (in Wyckoff Gardens).[4]

> Perhaps South Brooklyn could more accurately be described as two communities. In general the long-time residents of the community regard themselves as residents of South Brooklyn. Newcomers who have purchased and renovated brownstones tend to regard themselves as residents of Boerum Hill. Newcomers tend to be young, white, professional families . . .[5]

The renovation in the area was officially recognized in an article in New York Magazine in July, 1969 entitled, "Boom at Boerum Hill."[6] The

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[1] "Report by Margaret Harding on Conference with Al Harris and Sue Matsen of the Brooklyn Staff of the Cornell-OEO Project," Ithaca, N.Y., Aug. 19, 1969, p. 5.

[2] Survey on St. Mark's Place (no official title) by the Gowanus Center, South Brooklyn's Anti-Poverty Center, for the Gowanus-Boerum Hill Housing Association (no date) pp. 2 and 4. (There were 50 buildings on the block. The Gowanus Center surveyors reached 99 units in 26 buildings).

[3] Ibid., p. 3.

[4] Margaret Harding, "Visit to Cornell-OEO Project," 7/10/69.

[5] Millie Ann Konan, "Cornell-OEO Project, Summer Report," 1969, p. 2.

[6] New York Magazine, "Boom at Boerum Hill," L. J. Davis, July 14, 1969, p. 41.

article described in glowing terms middle class families who had been buying houses in the area and renovating them. The area in which renovation was taking place was defined as that between Wyckoff St. and Schermerhorn and Court St. and 4th Avenue. This area was called "Boerum Hill" in the article and it was said that more than 325 houses had been sold there since 1962, presumably to renovators.

The project area was described the same way in the Plan for New York City put out by the New York City Planning Commission in 1969.[1] The area north of Wyckoff St. was regarded as "Boerum Hill" and the renovation taking place was much applauded. South of Wyckoff St. was referred to as "Gowanus" and the major problem of this area was considered to be the future of the Gowanus Canal and the industrial uses surrounding it. This area was generally regarded as deteriorated. Recreational use has been promoted by some factions and opposed by others.

For the people the Cornell-OEO Project was trying to help, renovation meant basically a loss of housing. After a building was renovated, rents commonly went up from $100 to $200 to $300 per month for an apartment. Most of the original tenants could not afford this. For those on welfare there was an established rent ceiling of about $115 per month at that time.

There were many "for sale" signs in the neighborhood. Houses that could have been bought for eight or ten thousand dollars a few years earlier were being sold for twenty-five or thirty thousand. The low-income people living in them could not afford a down payment nor could they get credit. The result was that the people in the neighborhood were having houses sold out from under them. Finding housing for people forced to relocate was a typical problem encountered by family assistants when they went out to work with families in the area and one on which they spent a substantial amount of time. It also affected two of the family assistants. There was resentment on the part of long-time residents who were having to move. They were particularly unhappy at being driven out just when the neighborhood was beginning to improve.

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[1] Plan for New York City: A Proposal, Brooklyn, New York City Planning Commission, 1969, pp. 82-83.

A survey was undertaken by the research associate in Brooklyn in the spring of 1971 to pinpoint the location of the renovated homes. An unplanned benefit of the survey was that the four or five family assistants who helped with the data gathering felt they were truly a part of the research effort. The project director thought that some hostility to research might have been lessened earlier if more of the research had been undertaken in this way and if the family assistants had previously been given "research aide" as a title.

According to the survey there were 349 renovated buildings in the project area occuring in three major clusters (see Map 2). In the Boerum Hill section there were 175, concentrated mostly on Dean and Pacific Streets. The project survey did not find many instances of renewal on Bergen Street, although this street was mentioned in the Plan for New York City. The two did agree, however, that the heart of that renovation area lay between Hoyt and Nevins Streets.

In the eastern portion of the project area there were about 100 renovated buildings. These were mostly along 6th Avenue or on Lincoln Place, St. John's Place, and DeGraw Street. Renovation in this area is associated with that taking place in Park Slope, further to the east.

A pocket of renovation was also found southwest of the Gowanus Housing Project on DeGraw Street. Other rehabilitated structures were located along Court Street (mainly a commercial street). In all, there were about 74 renovated buildings in the section of the project area west of Gowanus Houses and south of Wyckoff Street.

The project responded to the need for housing first by requesting help from the college. The college located three graduate students with expertise in the housing area who served as consultants. They surveyed existing material on South Brooklyn and made a report to the project director.[1] As a result of their work, the project director got in touch with the United

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[1] "Housing in South Brooklyn: Suggested Courses of Immediate Action," A Report to the Cornell-OEO Project by K. Evans, B. Erlitz, and R. Kotelchuck, Nov. 5, 1969.

Neighborhood Houses, an organization that works with housing sponsors. The project, because of its temporary nature, could not serve as a sponsor, but the project director was able to act as a catalyst and bring other organizations together for this purpose.

In January, 1970, a housing committee was formed (along with several other committees) which consisted of several family assistants and key staff members. This group worked with other housing organizations in the community. These several efforts eventually evolved into the Gowanus Boerum Hill Housing Association which was formed under the sponsorship of the Brooklyn Heights Youth Center and Colony South Brooklyn Neighborhood Houses and with the aid of the Settlement Housing Fund. The Association's goal is to sponsor "much needed housing in the community . . .(both) mixed income and non profit, with emphasis on Co-operatives."[1]

The Gowanus Boerum Hill Housing Association presented plans in January, 1971 for the development of new low and moderate income housing on two blocks between Atlantic and Pacific Avenues and Court and Smith Streets. Up to four hundred units were to be built on each block in fourteen and eight story towers. The plans called for Mitchell-Lama and federal financing (under Section 236 of the National Housing Act of 1965). They also required the full support of the New York City Housing Development Administration and Planning Commission approval of a zoning change which would permit greater density on the two blocks. Neighborhood families would receive preference in occupancy.[2]

Location of Families Served by the Project

About half the families reached by the project in one-to-one work in their homes lived in the two housing projects. Family assistants visited 115 families in Wyckoff Gardens and 109 families in Gowanus Houses. The other 243 families the project worked with on an individual basis were scattered throughout the project area. The concentration of families was quite uneven as the project worked with 20% of the families in Wyckoff, 10% of the families

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[1]Leaflet entitled, "The Gowanus Boerum Hill Housing Association," Jan. 18, 1971.

[2]South Brooklyn News, Feb. 3, 1971, "New Gowanus Housing," p. 6.

in Gowanus, and from one to two percent of the families in the surrounding area (assuming there were 14,000 to 15,000 families in the project area outside the two Housing Authority complexes).[1]

Some of the families the project contacted lived in renovation areas. (See Map 3). This was the case in the Boerum Hill area and also in the area adjacent to Park Slope (the eastern portion of the project area). It is quite possible that these families were in the process of moving out of the neighborhood. The northern half of the project area was evenly covered by the family assistants. Many contacts were made in the blocks adjacent to the housing projects. The family assistants were also drawn largely from this area--12 from Wyckoff, 12 from Gowanus, and 10 from blocks in their immediate vicinity. (See Map 4).

The southern portion of the project area had relatively fewer contacts. This area corresponds to health areas 25 and 42 which were described earlier as being predominantly white and showing less severe evidence of poverty.

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[1] This estimate is derived from the fact that there were 67,386 people in the area according to the 1960 census. NYC Planning Commission figures indicate about 63,500 population in 1965. Assuming the population remained constant the next five years, excluding about 6,600 in the housing projects, it would have been approximately 57,000 in 1970. If average family size is taken to have been four, about 14,200 families were in the area in 1970 outside of the projects. The true figure is probably lower since the Sanborn survey of housing units, which is undertaken annually, shows that the area has been losing housing units over the past five years with the sole exception of the construction of Wyckoff Gardens.

Conclusion

The Cornell-OEO Project was most active in the Gowanus and Wyckoff Housing Projects and in the northern portion of the project area. This section turned out to be undergoing a further stage in the process of neighborhood succession. In this process an area is established for well-to-do residents who live in it for a time and then move farther out from the city to be followed by lower income people, usually immigrants. They too eventually leave and the neighborhood becomes black or, most recently, Puerto Rican. There have been a few instances in the past of block-busting in reverse, that is, of a lower income neighborhood turning into a middle or upper income one, and this seems to be what is taking place north of Wyckoff Street. A new population, young, white, and professional is moving into the area. This movement will probably be limited by the extent of the single family and two family brick and brownstone row houses. The five to seven story walk-up buildings in the area will probably remain the residences of lower income tenants.

The renovation is forcing the lower income residents of the area out, and this would certainly have to be taken into consideration if the project were going to be continued for any length of time. Even during its lifetime the project dealt with this problem on an individual basis by helping some families to relocate and on a community basis by participating in efforts to sponsor new housing in the area.

The project was designed to work with and serve a lower income population. The project boundaries (the outline of the 13 census tracts) did not, it turned out, delimit this population precisely. The people in the housing projects and in the immediate surrounding area came closest to resembling those envisioned in the project proposal. Defining a neighborhood is a difficult task and usually requires some experience within the area. In addition, neighborhood boundaries change for different purposes. The neighborhood the project was concerned with may or may not coincide with the neighborhood the Health Department means when it is looking for cases of lead poisoning or the neighborhood the Transit Authority looks at when it plans bus stops or the neighborhood the Planning Commission considers when it is trying to encourage renewal efforts. In any case, neighborhoods in New York City seem to be highly discontinuous.

Small pockets inhabited by very different groups exist side by side, a situation probably unique in the United States. Thus it should come as no surprise that the project boundaries included an area of diverse populations in terms of both ethnicity and income.

Table 1

Population of Health Areas and Census Tracts* in Cornell OEO Project Area by Ethnic Group

	HA 24				HA 25	HA 26				HA 42			
	CT 41	CT 43	CT 69	CT 71	CT 75	CT 39	CT 127	CT 129.0	CT 129.1	CT 125	CT 131	CT 133	CT 135
Total population	5,288	4,919	5,310	7,880	6,243	3,486	4,212	3,780	2,947	1,955	6,486	5,553	4,790
White**													
No.	4,274	3,984	4,982	4,527	6,181	2,938	1,957	3,255	2,416	1,930	5,576	5,461	4,631
%	81	81	94	57	99	84	46	86	82	99	86	99	97
Black													
No.	782	820	306	3,307	33	426	2,222	504	508	23	895	61	142
%	15	17	6	42	-	12	53	13	17	1	14	1	3
Other races													
No.	232	115	22	46	29	122	33	21	23	2	15	31	17
%	4	2	-	1	-	4	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Born in Puerto Rico													
No.	1,686	1,601	1,122	1,474	391	1,327	1,012	866	526	111	695	197	380
%	32	33	21	19	6	38	24	23	18	6	11	4	8
Puerto Rican Parentage													
No.	508	407	418	972	105	410	312	282	187	79	387	95	134
%	10	8	8	12	2	12	7	7	6	4	6	2	3

*HA = Health Area; CT = Census Tract
**Includes Puerto Ricans

SOURCE: U.S. Census

Table 2

Population of Portions of Health Areas 24, 25, 26, and 42 Contained in the Cornell-OEO Project Area, 1960

Ethnic Group	HA 24		HA 25		HA 26		HA 42		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	23,397		6,243		14,425		18,784		62,849	
White	9,579	41	5,790	93	5,644	40	15,520	83	36,533	58
Puerto Rican*	8,188	35	391	6	4,922	34	2,078	11	15,579	25
Black	5,215	22	33	1	3,660	25	1,121	6	10,029	16
Other	415	2	29	-	199	1	65	-	708	1

*Includes persons born in Puerto Rico and those of Puerto Rican parentage.

Table 3

Population of Health Areas in Cornell-OEO Project Area by Ethnic Group, 1965

	HA 24*		HA 25**		HA 26		HA 42***		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	24,394		28,809		18,624		17,115		88,942	
White	8,864	36	22,137	77	7,479	40	11,516	67	49,996	56
Non-white	7,092	29	1,139	4	7,067	38	2,154	13	17,452	20
Puerto Rican	8,438	35	5,533	19	4,078	22	3,445	20	21,494	24

*Includes five census tracts, one of which is not in Cornell-OEO Project area: Gowanus Houses in HA 24.
**Includes two census tracts, one of which is not in project area.
***Includes HA 40.

Table 4

School Utilization and Enrollment 1967-68

School	Grades	Average years over or under grade	Total	White		Negro		Puerto Rican	
				No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
PS 32	K-5	-1.2	928	132	14.2	356	38.3	440	47.4
PS 38	K-5	-0.7	1,259	148	11.7	350	27.7	761	60.4
IS 6	6-8	-2.3	1,269	164	12.9	291	22.9	814	64.1

SOURCE: Plan for NYC, NYC Planning Commission, 1969, Part 3, Brooklyn, p. 87

Table 4a

Racial/Ethnic Distribution of Public School Students by School District* Within New York City

	Negro	Spanish Surnamed American	American Indian and Oriental	Other
Brooklyn District 15	17.3	50.1	1.2	31.4

*New Decentralized Districts

SOURCE: "Selected Statistics on Pupils and Staff in NYC's New Decentralized School Districts, 1969-70, The University of the State of New York, The State Education Department, Information Center on Education, Albany.

Table 5

Population of Gowanus Houses by Ethnic Group*

	1967		1970	
	No.	%	No.	%
Total population	4,846	-	4,727	-
White	284	5.9	212	4.5
Black	2,974	61.4	3,006	63.6
Puerto Rican**	1,588	32.7	1,509	31.9

*Figures are as of Jan. 1 for each year
**Includes others (mainly Asians) who occupy 0.7% of all housing authority units.

Table 5a

Population of Wyckoff Gardens by Ethnic Group*

	1967**		1969		1970	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total population	1,160	-	1,851	-	1,880	-
White	275	23.7	381	20.6	388	20.6
Black	396	34.1	732	39.5	769	40.9
Puerto Rican***	489	42.2	738	39.9	723	38.5

*Figures are as of Jan. 1 for each year.
**Wyckoff Gardens was not completely occupied in 1967.
***Includes others (mainly Asians) who occupy 0.7% of all housing authority units.

Table 6

Characteristics of Total Tenant Population for Gowanus Houses and Wyckoff Gardens, 1967-1970*

	Gowanus		Wyckoff		
	1967	1970	1967**	1969	1970
Population	4,846	4,727	1,160	1,851	1,880
No. of families	1,124	1,131	332	522	524
Avg. family size	4.3	4.2	3.5	3.5	3.6
No. of minors	2,799	2,726	559	929	969
Avg. family size	2.5	2.4	1.7	1.8	1.8
As % of population	57.8	57.7	48.2	50.2	51.5
Avg. gross income	$4,830	$5,563	$4,568	$4,795	$5,135
No. of families with head 60 yrs. & over	55	85	97	157	153
As % of all families	4.9	7.5	29.2	30.1	29.2
Persons 60 yrs. & over living alone	16	26	61	98	99
Population 60 yrs. & over***	74	107	117	188	188
As % of population	1.5	2.3	10.1	10.2	10.0
No. of welfare families	185	331	40	108	128
As % of all families	16.5	29.3	12.0	20.7	24.4
with head 60 yrs. & over	27	42	24	47	54
No. of broken families	236	344	16	48	60
As % of all families	21.0	30.4	4.8	9.2	11.5
No. of families with two or more employed	158	137	46	53	63
As % of all families	14.1	12.1	13.9	10.2	12.0
Avg. no. of years in public housing	8.3	9.5	1.1	2.7	3.6

*As of Jan. 1 of each year
**Partially occupied
***Includes only household heads and spouses

SOURCE: Special Tabulation of Tenant Characteristics, NYCHA, Management Dept., Statistics Division

CORNELL - NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY (OEO) PROJECT AREA IN SOUTH BROOKLYN

CENSUS TRACTS AND PORTIONS OF HEALTH AREAS CONTAINED IN THE CORNELL-OEO PROJECT AREA

39 Census tract

25 Health area

SCALE 1.25": 1000'

SOURCE: N.Y.C. DEPT. OF CITY PLANNING, FEBRUARY 1, 1963.

CORNELL - NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY (OEO) PROJECT AREA IN SOUTH BROOKLYN

N

REHABILITATED HOUSES IN THE PROJECT AREA

* Rehabilitated house

2

SOURCE: N.Y.C. DEPT OF CITY PLANNING, FEBRUARY 1, 1963

CORNELL - NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY (OEO) PROJECT AREA IN SOUTH BROOKLYN

N

LOCATION OF FAMILIES SERVED ON A ONE-TO-ONE BASIS BY THE CORNELL-OEO PROJECT

X Family residence

3

SCALE 1.25": 1000'

SOURCE: N.Y.C. DEPT. OF CITY PLANNING, FEBRUARY 1, 1963

CORNELL - NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY (OEO) PROJECT AREA IN SOUTH BROOKLYN

N

LOCATION OF RESIDENCES OF FAMILY ASSISTANTS

● **Residence of family assistant**

4

SCALE 1.25": 1000

SOURCE: NYC. DEPT OF CITY PLANNING, FEBRUARY 1, 1963